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De Lorean's cohort in car venture has checkered past

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He was tried four times for conspiring to firebomb a New Orleans building during Mardi Gras.

He was arrested when he tried to avoid testifying in an investigation into the assassination of President John Kennedy.

He claimed the CIA helped steal his idea for a World's Fair in New Orleans.

He said he headed security for the presidential campaign of porno king Larry Flynt.

And at various times, Gordon Novel, 47, has been identified by the press or himself as a nightclub operator, a private eye, a tape recording expert and a CIA operative at the infamous Bay of Pigs incident.

Now he's helping John De Lorean in what may be a quixotic quest to build a new De Lorean sports car.

THE ARSON CASE created years of trouble for Novel, who lived in the Los Angeles area until earlier this year and who now gives an address in the New

Orleans suburb of Metairie.

In 1976, he was arrested for an alleged plan to use a weather balloon to firebomb a religious building in New Orleans. After two mistrials, a third trial resulted in a conviction.

Novel, who served as his own co-counsel in the case, was sentenced to three years in prison.

But the conviction was thrown out on appeal, and Novel was released from prison. A fourth attempt to convict Novel also failed.

NOVEL was mentioned as a key witness in an investigation of a possible conspiracy in Kennedy's death. The investigation was led by Jim Garrison, New Orleans' district attorney in the late 1960s.

In 1967, Novel failed to show up for a grand jury appearance in Garrison's investigation and was arrested in Columbus, Ohio. Novel then claimed to have been working for Garrison.

"My code name was Alexander, and electronics was my field," Novel told

reporters in April 1967. He called Garrison a fraud. The conspiracy investigation later fizzled.

The World's Fair incident began in 1977, when Novel filed a \$1.5 billion suit. He claimed the CIA and others conspired to kidnap and murder him to steal his idea for a fair in New Orleans.

A judge threw out the suit in 1983, saying it contained unsubstantiated claims of intrigue "worthy of a James Bond thriller."

Novel joined the Flynt campaign in 1983, after Flynt obtained videotapes of De Lorean that were later used in the automaker's drug trial.

Flynt later claimed that De Lorean and Novel fabricated a controversial audio recording that purported to prove De Lorean's life was being threatened by government witnesses in the drug case.

In early 1984, Novel's car was stolen in Louisiana. The car was found later by sheriff's officers, who recovered several tape recordings near the vehicle and gave them to the FBI for possible use in the De Lorean drug case.

Free Press Business Writer John Saunders contributed to this report